automatically checking an inventory for availability of an item corresponding to the customer order by accessing an inventory data base;

retrieving the item by accessing an inventory storage location data base;

building a load for shipment containing the retrieved item; and

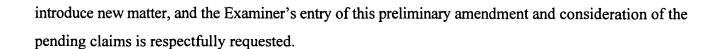scheduling the load for delivery to the customer. --

REMARKS

Consideration and entry of this preliminary amendment is respectfully requested. This is a preliminary amendment filed with the continuing prosecution application of allowed U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/474,970, filed June 7, 1995, with expected issue date of May 26, 1998, which itself is a continuation of U.S. Patent No. 5,666,493, issued September 9, 1997. The application as filed in the parent case contained claims 1-9. This preliminary amendment cancels claims 1-8 and adds new claims 10-18, leaving claims 9-18 remaining in the application. The amendment also amends the specification and abstract to clarify the invention as claimed.

New claims 10-16 are directed to a system for processing customer orders. Independent clam 10 recites the system's primary elements, while claims 11-16 are dependent claims reciting further elements of each of the primary elements. New claims 17 and 18 are independent claims directed to methods for processing a customer order. Support for the new claims is found in the specification.

The changes made to the application by this preliminary amendment are believed not to

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introduce new matter, and the Examiner's entry of this preliminary amendment and consideration of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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